

Media Release:

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Recent Rains Bring Desert Park to Life

Recent heavy rains across Central Australia have resulted in an explosion of life at the Alice Springs Desert Park (ASDP) so now is a great time to observe the native wildlife of the area, especially some creatures not commonly associated with the desert habitat.

ASDP Zoology Curator Nick Atchison said the dry environment of Central Australia seems like an unsuitable place for frogs, but there are quite a lot of frogs who are skilled drought-dodgers and happily survive in the Australian deserts.

“The same moisture that brings forth thousands of winged termites on their marriage flights, causes small, but fat, burrowing frogs to emerge from their underground sleeping spots,” Mr Atchison said.

“The heavy rains have awakened these slumbering frogs for a short burst of activity to welcome tadpoles before burrowing deep into the sand to await further rain, while over the next few weeks these tadpoles will enjoy the moist desert claypans before developing into Spencer Burrowing Frogs.

“Pulses of activity are a feature of life at the moment and the floods bring change and rebirth for many aquatic animals also.

“Fish, such as the hardy Spangled Grunter, will die if the waters dry up but their eggs survive in the mud until next heavy rain fills the waterholes again.”

ASDP Botany Curator Scott Pullyblank said the Desert Park has also experienced a sudden growth of native vegetation.

“We have removed the introduced Buffel Grass (*Cenchrus ciliaris*) from a lot of the Desert Park and now growing in its stead is a carpet of native grasses such as Five Minute Grass (*Tripogon lolliformis*) and Eight Day Grass (*Fimbristylus dichotoma*), which is from ‘sedges’ a family of flowering plants that resemble grasses.

“Soon they will be joined by a host of ‘slower starters’ as more native vegetation emerges.

“In stream beds, rocky areas and at the base of some trees Resurrection Ferns like the Woolly Cloak Ferns (*Cheilanthes lasiophylla*) have appeared.”

ASDP Specialist Keeper of Invertebrates and Reptiles Jochem Van Der Reijden said the abundance of rain has led to the appearance of many insects, beetles and other critters.

“The Yeperenye caterpillars, Hawk Moths, Spencer's Burrowing Frog, Sand Grasshoppers and many other creatures can be seen enjoying the wealth of food from the grasses sprouting after the rains,” Mr Van Der Reijden said.

“The summer rains are an exciting time with an explosion of life providing an excellent opportunity to discover the tales of invertebrates at the Alice Springs Desert Park.”

The Alice Springs Desert Park is open from 7.30am til 6pm. For more information about the Desert Park call 8951 8788 or visit www.alice Springs Desert Park.com.au.

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Media Note – for more information / interviews please contact Scott Pullyblank on 8951 8764

Image 1 – Recent rainfall brings new life to this saltpan at Alice Spring Desert Park (Photo: Anthony Molyneux)

Image 2 – This normally dry streambed is overflowing after the rains (Photo: Scott Pullyblank)

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